

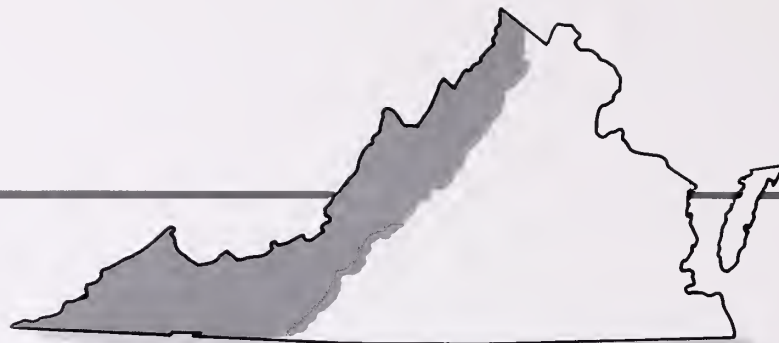
# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

FEBRUARY 1991

ONE DOLLAR



*Mountain Kin*



"It's quiet, peaceable, in the mountains. In the fall of the year, you can smell the leaves. Ain't nothin' like it."

—66-year-old Jesse Bridge, Augusta County

## Introduction

There's another way of living out there, west of the Blue Ridge. You could maybe say that folks up in the mountains have a way of seeing things different. They have a way of seeing things up close.

Maybe that has something to do with being able to walk out the back door to a creek you can fish with your eyes closed, or being able to call in turkeys every spring morning before the school bus drives up. Or, maybe it has to do with never missing the first day the blackgum leaves turn red or the shadbush blooms, or the fact that you can't be scared of climbing or getting lost when you live in the mountains.

But, most probably that different way of living has something to do with never having to wonder about what's important in life.

Anyway, that's what this issue is all about. Freelance writer and photographer Tim Wright went into the mountains and carried back some voices, some images of Virginia. Here, in these pages, we hope to stir a memory of our mountains, of the people who live there, of the stories they tell about living in a land that most of us have never known or have long forgotten.

We hope it might help you see things a little differently—from a mountaintop.

—Virginia Shepherd



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# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



*Catawba rhododendron; photo by William Lea.*

## Special Photo Issue

Researched and compiled by  
m Wright and Virginia Shepherd  
Design by Emily Pels

*Cover: Roanoke County; photo by Tim Wright.*

*Following page: Mossy Creek; photo by Michael Simon.*



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Mountain Kin



*Scott County; photo by Tim Wright.*

*"It's fun to go to the big city once  
in a while, but I'd rather live in the country."*  
*10-year-old Catherine Kelly, Marion*







Spring peeper, photo by Rob Simpson.





*Washington County; photo by Tim Wright.*



*Catherine Kelly, photo by Tim Wright.*

"My two younger sisters, they'll go out with me. If they find a frog, they'll come running to me. They're not really afraid of it as long as I'm holding it."

—Catherine Kelly







*Below: Geoff and his father Gerald Hall. The Halls live exactly dead center between Chilhowie and Saltoville on Route 91. The home Geoff's father built sits nestled against a hill so steep that even deer watch their footing.*



*White-tailed bucks fighting; photo by Roy Lowe.*



*Cottontail rabbit; photo by Lloyd B. Hill.*



*Tim Wright*

"A lot of people is goin' into the mountains and their buddies are egginn' 'em on, sayin', 'Oh, you didn't get nuthin' today.' That ain't what it's all about . . . Daddy has taught me what it's all about. When we took my first deer, me and Daddy got down on our knees right there beside that deer and thanked God for giving it to us. It ain't the point of killin'."

*—22-year-old Geoff Hall,  
Saltoville*









*Groundhog; photo by Kraig Haske.*



*Smyth County; photo by Tim Wright.*



*Elgin Greer; photo by Tim Wright.*

"T here weren't nuthin' thrown away back then like it is now. That was for survival. We'd tack groundhogs up side of the building and dry them and cut shoe-strings out of the hide. They were pretty good shoe-strings. The young ones, about half grown, they were pretty good eating. People would cook 'em and can 'em.

—73-year-old Elgin Greer,  
Saltville





*Fuller Bros. General Store, Snowflake; photo by Tim Wright.*

“We’d go out after rabbits, come a big snow. We could sell rabbits. We could take them to the store and they’d give us 10-15 cents apiece for ‘em. I could get three bags of tobacco for 15 cents.”  
—Elgin Greer



*John Fuller, Snowflake; photo by Tim Wright.*







*Tobacco shed, Washington County; photo by Tim Wright.*









Washington County church; photo by Tim Wright.

"The biggest reason I love nature is because I see it as a reflection of God. It's the way He created it. I feel closer to God hiking in the mountains. This is the closest point I can come to Him. That's why it hurts me so bad when I see people abuse it."

—21-year-old Pamela Trent,  
Big Stone Gap

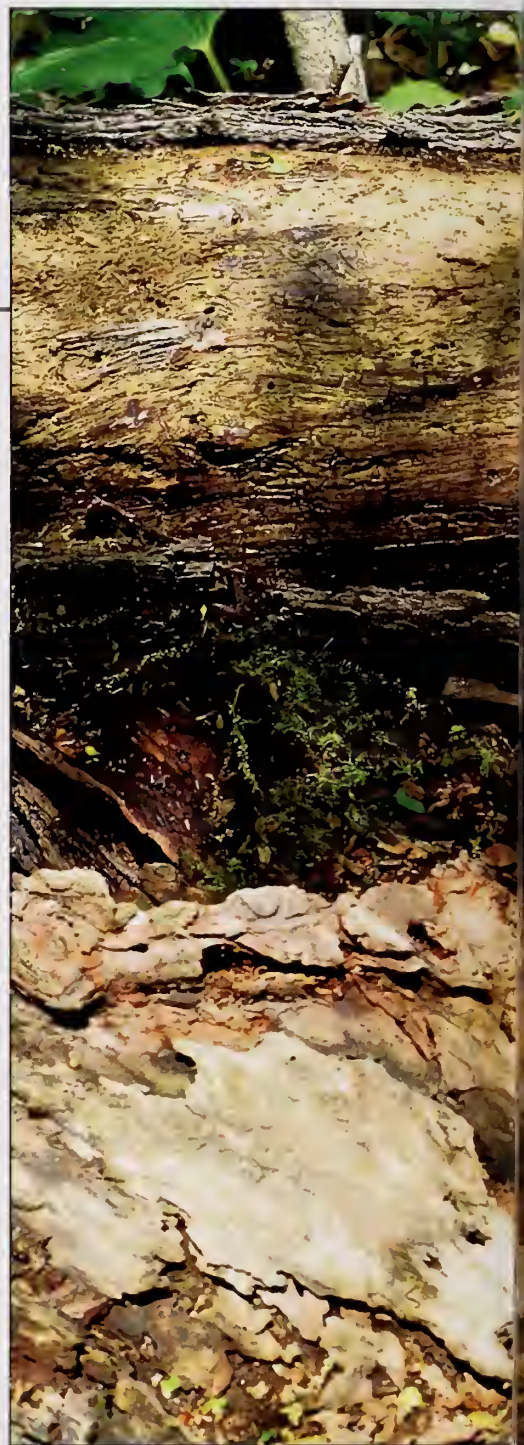
William Lea





*Pamela Trent; photo by Tim Wright.*

"E verything is so interrelated. Man's actions and Nature's reactions are connected. The consequences of what we have done since the Industrial Revolution are starting to arise. And we're gonna have to deal with those consequences."  
—Pamela Trent







*Trillium; photo by Pels.*



"I think snakes are real neat and there's not a whole lot to be afraid of. Unless their poisonous, they can't really hurt you that much. Anyways, they just slither away most likely. I just think they're really interesting and I enjoy learning about them . . . I scare my mom with them a lot."

—Catherine Kelly



*Black racer; photo by Lynda Richardson.*





*Black bear cub; photo by William Lea.*



*Mountain laurel; photo by Roy Edwards.*


“It’s more fun in the woods than in school.”  
—Catherine Kelly

*Following page: Red squirrel; photo by Kraig Haske.*



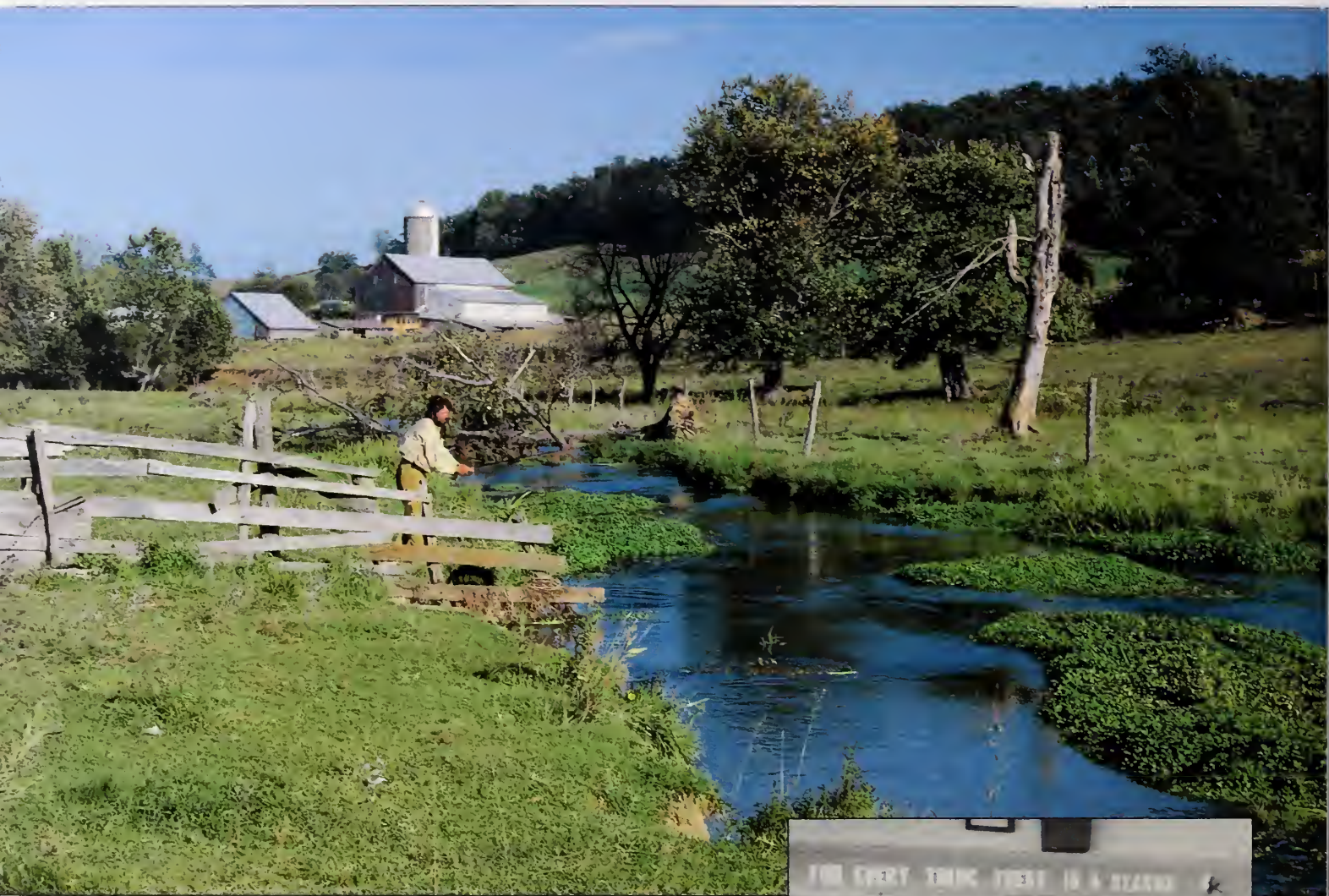






*"What we hunt, we don't  
just throw away. We eat  
'em and everything. We  
don't ever hunt 'em  
we don't like and gonna  
throw away."*

*—12-year-old Eric Sheets,  
Sugar Grove*



*Mossy Creek; photo by Michael Simon.*

"T here's a creek runnin' down beside the house with a big rock out over it. I like to sit there a lot of times and watch the trout run up and down the creek. I fish for 'em every once in a while, but I throw 'em back in the same place."

—Eric Sheets



*Eric Sheets; photo by Tim Wright.*





"My favorite time to fish is somewhere around May, when it's kinda crisp, and you know it's gonna get warm and the day's gonna get better . . .

I love to fish. You can be out there with your friends and tell stories and talk more than you can when you're hunting—and it'll still be fishing."

—16-year-old  
Travis Painter,  
Crimora

Gregory Scott





Ron Thomason; photo by Tim Wright.

"The most wonderful thing about turkey hunting is the tranquility of the morning at 5 a.m. You cannot believe the stillness on a beautiful morning. Just before light, I hoot like a barred owl, and off in the distance I'll hear a gobbler just tear the woods down. And that is the most beautiful sound you will ever hear."

—Ron Thomason, Marion







*Wild turkeys; photo by Lloyd B. Hill.*



“W

e couldn't afford to buy shells during the Depression. So, we'd climb a tree and shake a coon out of it for the dogs to get. We weren't out there for the sport of it.”

—Elgin Greer



Raccoon: photo by William Lea.





*White-tailed buck; photo by William Lea.*

“It’s a different world. If you get bored, you can just walk to another ridge and get another look.”

—Travis Painter

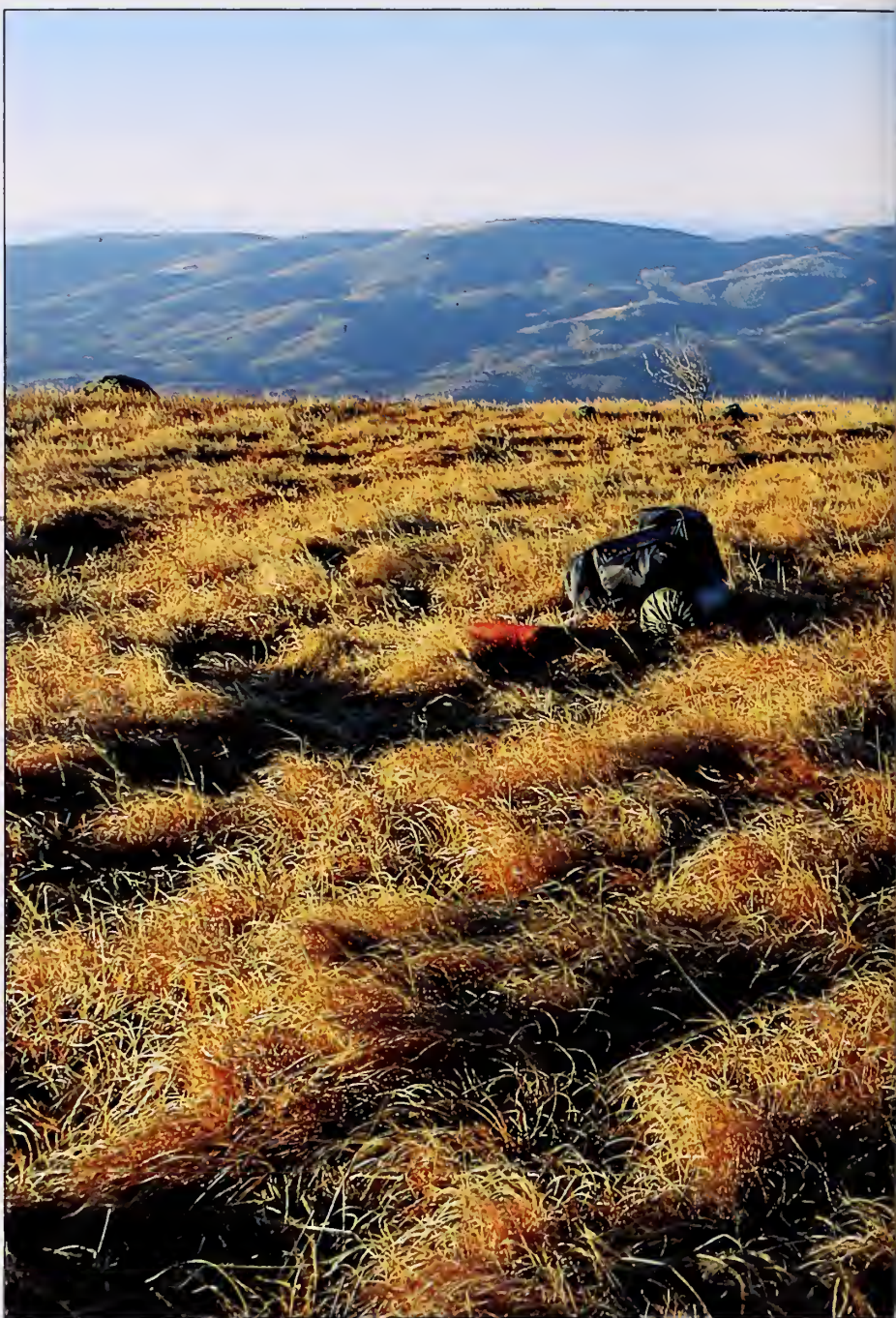




*Tim Wright; photo by Lynda Richardson.*

**f**rom the valley floor you can see the bald, grassy slopes that spill down along the ridge leading to White Top's summit. I told somebody who lives nearby that I planned to camp on those slopes the next night. He greeted my plan with one of those slight smiles that suggested I was crazy or stupid.

The sun set the next night without a cloud in the sky. Orange and yellow bands of light stretched far across the horizon. Forty, 50, maybe 60 miles away, solitary peaks in



Kentucky and Tennessee were outlined against the fading red light. In the valleys below, the lights of Bristol, Abingdon, Chilhowie and other communities grew brighter each moment.

You can't escape the wind if you want to watch the

lights of Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky and West Virginia grow with the evening twilight or if you want to lie in the darkness counting falling stars as they arch from horizon to horizon.

And forget about a tent. Chances are it will collapse or





*White Top Mountain sunrise; photo by Tim Wright.*

go sailing off in the middle of the night.

I closed up the bivy sac over my head and hunkered down for the night.

Dawn came accompanied by howling winds. I opened the top of the bivy sack and peered outside. Up here,

there is no frost. But the moisture in my breath left ice inside the sack. In the half light, I pulled my clothes together and dressed while still in my cramped sleeping bag. By the time I surveyed my surroundings again, a bright glow hung on the

horizon below the crest of the mountain.

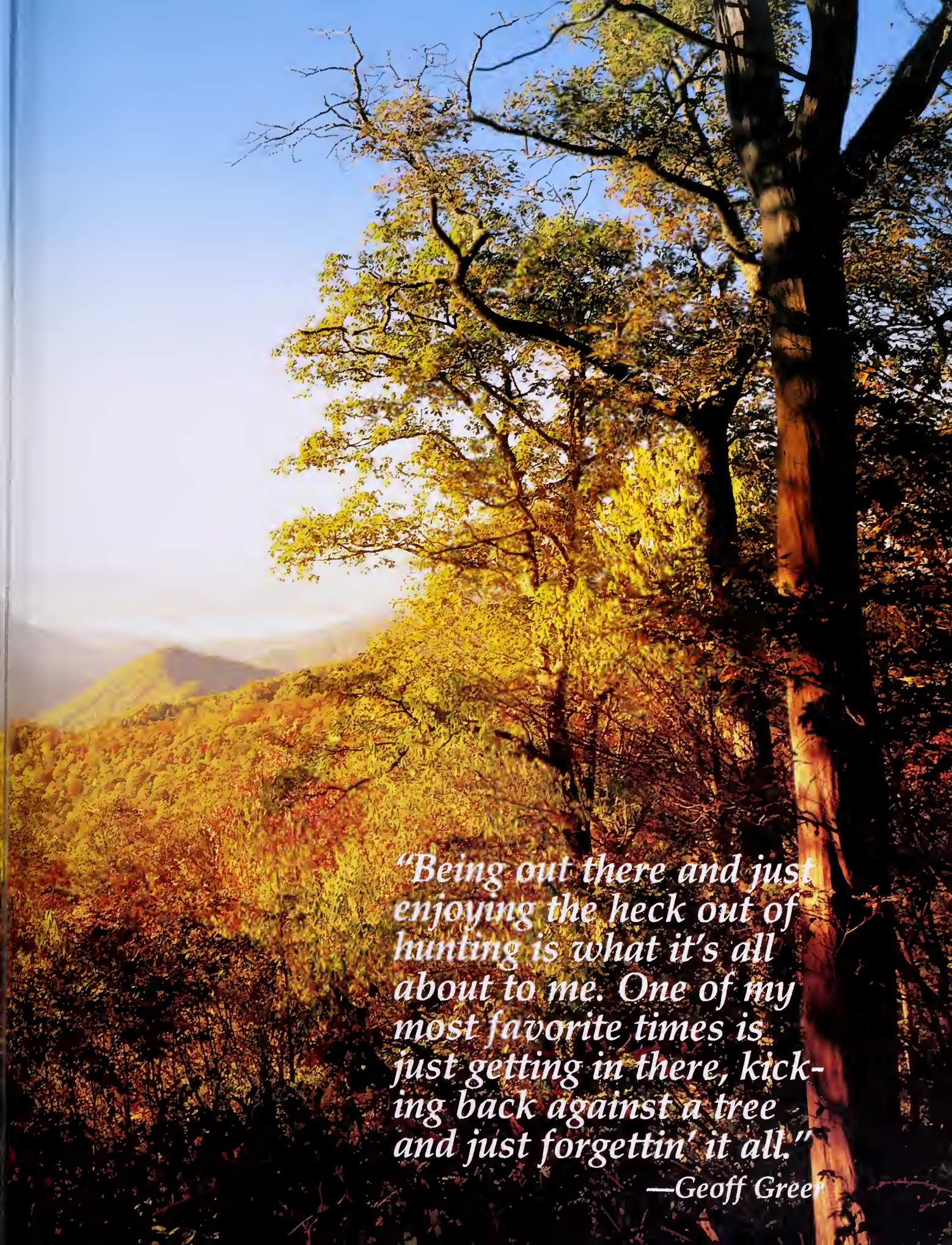
I sat up to face the sun rising at my feet. Behind me, the shadow of White Top stretched for miles across the valley.—*Tim Wright*

*Following page: photo by Dwight Dyke.*









*"Being out there and just enjoying the heck out of hunting is what it's all about to me. One of my most favorite times is just getting in there, kicking back against a tree and just forgettin' it all."*

*—Geoff Greer*







# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



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